THE SOUTH INDIAN ART GALLERY.

BY

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ILLUSTRATED.

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FOREWORD.

WHEN I was requested to write a Foreword to the neat little volume entitled "The South Indian Art Gallary", I was at first inclined to deny myself the pleasure in consideration of my present state of weak health; but on second thought I have tried to do it with the kind help of my young friend Mr. V. Sundaram, for which I feel much thankful so that I may not lose the opportunity of joining in the protest against many misconceptions that prevail both amongst Indians and the Westerners, which tempt them to look down upon

specimens of Indian sculpture as unrealistic and monstrous. In doing so it is gratifying to be able to rely on the sentiments of three of the most distinguished of Western Writers themselves.

It is Thomas Carlyle, I think, who has most truly said that in all works of Art, if thou know a work of Art from a Daub of Artifice then wilt thou discern eternity looking through Time, the Godlike rendered visible. "Art in all ages is a higher synonym for God Almighty's facts". All real Art is definable as God's fact on the disimprisoned soul of fact". Every

limb and lineament of Indian Sculpture seem to breath the above sentiment.

The ideas that Art evokes in us are said to be five fold. They are (1) Ideas of Power, (2) Ideas of truth, (3) Ideas of Beauty, (4) Ideas of Imitation and (5) Ideas of Relation. Of these, three are of course of greater importance than the rest, namely, Ideas of Power, Beauty and Truth, corresponding to the Trinity of our and other Religions. As in Religion, so in Art, no work of Art will purely and exclusively stand for Power, Beauty or Truth, but will necessarily represent all the

above qualities, at the same time signifying one of them with added emphasis. In other words, while it innately connotes all the three, it has one of them saliently permeating over and above the rest.

Again, amongst the three, the Art of power must be given the pre-eminence. Power is in the Sphere of Art, what Sakthi is in the field of Religion. The essence of Power in Art consists in its appeal to man's higher emotions and nobler sentiments, and also in that it elevates our minds and character by evoking in us an over-powering sense of sublime devotion and

divine power. It is in this sense that every Great Artist is necessarily religious. In other words 'All great Art is Praise'. If we apply this test of Power to Indian sculpture and more especially to the specimens available in the famous Meenakshi Temple of Madura, on which in my youth I have gazed and gazed in rapt admiration and wonder, who can dare deny that they more than satisfy the highest requirements of Art perfection, in that they create in us feelings of spritual sublimity and divine power, thereby chasten-

ing and enhancing our very being and character.

The usual accusation ungenerously levelled against specimens of Indian Sculpture is that they are not true to nature and are very poor imitation of nature and human life. I question the very premises of the conclusion and say that imitation is not the only and best test of excellence for all great works of Art.

Ruskin while characterising the several works of Architecture into their distinctive category, has most aptly brought them under two mood classes the one characterised

by an exceeding preciousness and delicacy to which people recur with a sense of affectionate admiration as best represented in the Grecian type; and the other by a severe and mysterious majesty which creates in us a reverential awe like that felt before the presence of a great Spirutual Power, as best typified in the specimens of Indian Sculpture. Now, the difference between these two orders of Art, is not merely that which there is in nature between things beautiful and sublime. It is also, as Ruskin puts it, the difference between what is derivative and

original in man's work : for whatever is in the Fine Arts fair or beautiful is imitated from natural forms ; and what is not so derived, but depends for its dignity upon the creative impulses and arrangements received from the Artist's mind, becomes the expression of the power of that mind and reflects a sublimity high in próportion to the power expressed, "the one consisting in a just and humble veneration for the works of God upon earth, and the other in an understanding of the dominion over those works which has been vested in man." As Emerson

would have it, in the fine arts, not imitation but creation must be the aim. The artist must give the gloom of gloom and the sunshine of sunshine. When there is already a living nature before us, it is profitless and idle to simply copy it. As in a portrait, so in sculpture the artist must create and inscribe the ideal and the character, and not slavishly reproduce the features. "As far as the Spiritual character of the period overpowers the artist and finds expression in his work, so far will it retain a certain grandeur and will represent to future beholders the unknown, the

inevitable and the divine." No artist however great, can quite emancipate himself from his age and country, the religion, usages and education prevailing in his time. And if we look at Indian Sculpture bearing the above truth in mind, the inference how great did religion hold sway in the olden days and how people derived the utmost comfort and solace from religion is irresistable. It is this all-important truth that Indian Sculpture reveals unto us; and have we any reason to feel sorry for it, simply because our ancient

artists had no thought of revelling in sensual scenes?

Mr. Sundara Sarma richly deserves to be congratulated on his having brought out this little volume in so far as the work is calculated to advance the cause of Indian Sculpture. In writing this, I must guard myself against being supposed to share any of his attempts at reading the mysteries supposed to be contained in the Yali and the like or the possession of any keys to the unravelling of those mysteries. It is to be hoped that undeterred by want of encouragement, which is the sad

fate of every Indian enterprise, the author will continue in his research work and that he may be in a position to throw light on the merits of the great specimens of Indian Sculpture and I trust he will permit me to say that the cause which he has so much at heart will gain more by a more temperate expression of his views, avoiding all unnecessary violence in language and hostile criticisms. No doubt, western critics are often unsparing in their ignorant and unjust criticisms of us. But nothing is lost by avoiding imitating them.

S. SUBRAMANIAM.

PREFACE.

THE religion of a country showeth the sum total of its knowledge and knowledge may be classified into Art, Literature and Science. Of these three, the first two are only means to an end and the third an end in itself. Science comprises within itself all branches of study for what is science but syståmatised knowledge? Art and Literature are the means of express-

ing the systematised knowledge. Of these, the *Literature* of a country is what its people *thought and spoke* and *Art* is what its people *thought and wrought*. Since it is by your actions that you are judged it is by your Art that you will be judged. It is, as a well known writer puts it, the Artists of a country that can give a status to their motherland. A high status has been given to our blessed Motherland by our ancient

Master Artists. But we have only relics of the glorious master pieces left to us by them, for we have hitherto in our hypnotic state allowed vandalism to have its full havoc and play. But what remains is sufficient to inspire and teach us. Any more neglect on our part will be more than criminal though not so in the eyes of the Penal Code. We do not, under the present de-Indian-sed circumstances help and

encourage a few artists that may be found here and there in our country to do for us what our ancestors had from the ancient artists. Should we add to this pitiable indifference, the folly of neglecting the ancient master pieces? Should we not at least preserve the ancient monuments under our charge out of gratitude for our ancestors? Though to the coming generations we do not leave similar legacies, are we not

in duty bound to hand over in good condition what we have received from our ancestors? Oh my brethren! In this land of *Dharma* it needs only reminding one of his duty and I hope it will soon be done It is with such a hope that I have ventured to bring out this book.

Many thanks are due to Mr. S. Nagarajan, proprietor of the Kalvi Publishing House for undertaking to publish this book in such a

handy form with a nice and neat get up.

K. Sundara Sarma

MADURA. November 1918.

The South Indian Art Gallery.

On the southern bank of the river Vaigai, about a hundred miles from where it empties itself into the Bay of Bengal, stands the ancient city of Madura, the capital of a kingdom of more than two thousand years within

'historic' limits. No better site could have been chosen, in these parts of India, for such a famous place, which as early as 20 B. C., had sent an embassy to congratulate Augustus Caeser. It is here that the undulatory soil that rises right from the Arabian Sea receives a check and is transformed into a vast plain to stretch as far as the Bay in the east. Nothing can be more grand to a Madurian than to watch the violet rid-

ges of mountains standing in succession, dark against the golden sky of the setting sun. The eastern horizon is unbroken and reminds the onlooker of the nearness of the mighty Deep. The four tall pyramidal *gopurams* that guard the sacred shrine of the fish-eyed goddess *Meenakshi*, who protects the place and its inhabitants, peep out from the grove in the horizon as mighty grey violet towers against the pale blue sky,

and look like arms of Mother Earth beckonning the celestial hosts to come down. To one endowed with inner vision, apart from these gopurams stand betwixt them two mightier towers stretching far into the blue vault in lovely shining hues, rising higher and higher as the prayers in the altars go forth! These towers are a daily warning to the sun and the moon to be cautious lest they should stumble in their diar-

nal rounds. The dame Cassiopia, who circles round and round the Golden Meru, with Thruvam overhead, dares not sit erect in her celestial chair out of high regard for Meenakshi; while Orion the heavenly knight, fails not to keep his nocturnal watch right over-head except for a few days when the Day-Lord is his guest.

This charming picture of Madura is kept up till you are very near this ancient

city and the moment you are within the town all is gone and you are enveloped by the dirt and smoke of a modern capital. One may go round and round the con-*squaric* streets of Madura in the hope of coming across any relic of the hoary past, but the search will be in vain till he comes to the very heart of the city wherein is located the famous temple of the local goddess. To a western-er the city would appear to

owe much to his own civilization, for he can scarcely find any sign of the past in the city itself where dynasties after dynasties ruled peacefully in plenty, to the greatest joy of the inhabitants. The modernity of the houses where people dwell will make one believe that the city could not have been so vast in ancient days; but nothing can be more mistaken, for the absence of the relics of ancient dwellings is the

very reason which makes this city so hallowed to the Indian memory.

In the flourishing days of yore, in Madura as in other parts of this fertile country, there was not the slightest trace of individuality. An individual apart was nothing, he was literally lost in the community which was really everything; indeed a very corporate life was led. The modern co-operative and other allied movements are

but dim shadows of the past, half-hearted attempts to revive the happy days of yore. As such any individual cared not to build for himself like the present day New Yorkian who vies with his neighbour in building higher and higher. Pitiable American! He thinks he can so reach heaven easily. He will do well to go to India where he will be taught that the real way to reach heaven is by lying low and not by ascend-

ing up an eleven storied palace.

The Madurians of old knew very well that their physical existence was but a temporary one here while that the corporate humanity existed for ever. So they formed themselves into a society and led a very happy social life. There was not then the struggle for existence which one meets with everywhere now. *Even the very spot on which one is thrown*

down from the mother's womb cannot be called one's own. Such is the acme of the so called civilization now! One submerged in poverty plucks a fruit (a nature's product to satisfy his natural craving) from a neighbouring tree and forthwith he is called a thief by the Penal Code with the inevitable consequences. But not so in days of old. Each one formed part of a whole and all his wants and life were pre-arranged for him

by the whole society in return for which he also contributed his little mite. Theft was unknown. Things dropped carelessly on the road remained where they were let fall, till the owner chose to return for them.

Under such conditions any lasting monument was built by the community for the community. In fact the whole life of the community centred round such edifice; the extent of which varied

according to the importanc
and population of the plac
In a big city such an edific
was a pretty large one an
therein were located the ten
ple, the university, the a
gallery, the public lectu
halls, the offices of t
panchayat, the theatre, an
all such things as are t
necessary concomitants
every developed society. Pr
vate dwellings were us
only for the bare necessiti
of life; hence like soldiers

ımp they lived in temporary
ɔofs. Such was their self
ənial. Would that modern-
'S sacrifice a tenth part of
ıeir expense in domestic
ınities! that will, if collect-
ely effered and wisely emp-
yed, build a noble temple
every holy spot in India.
am no advocate for mean-
ss of private habitation.
would fain introduce into it
magnificence, care and
auty, where they are possi-
; but I would not have

that useless expense in unnoticed fineries or formalities;......things which have become foolishly and apathetically habitual, things on whose common appliance hang whole trades, to which there never yet belonged the blessing of giving one ray of real pleasure or becoming of the remotest or most contemptible use, things which cause half the expense of life, and destroy more than half its comfort, manliness, res-

pectability, freshness, and fecility." Ah Ruskin! Were you living in Madura in your previous incarnation? How else can you be inspired by such noble ideas? Indeed even kings had no palaces of their own. In some places the palace of the king formed part and parcel of the temple itself, which accounts for the fact that in the Tamil language the temple is called *Koil* (*ko*=king; *il*=house). Only in later

times some kings began to have palaces of their own and the community took pleasure in building them for in the first place the king was ever regarded as an *amsam* of Vishnu, and secondly the palace was also for the benefit of the people at large.

Such monumental edifices may be found even today scattered throughout the length and breadth of India. And in Madura such an edifice lies in the very heart of

the town known as the Great Temple,the origin of which no earthly memory knows. Successive dynasties have contributed their own mite to this prehistoric central shrine by way of extentions and additions. The outermost parts of this great shrine is attributed to the times of Thirumalai Naick, the tenth of the Naick kings of Madura, three and a half centuries ago. The last days of ancient *Home Rule* for Madura were in

those years. Even in those days the society of Madura had not lost wholly the ancient flavour of a corporate happy Indian life. A record of such a glorious life is to be found in the monumental edifices left to us by the people who lived then. We are proud of them and thank their souls for having left to us such valuable legacies.

It is not possible and it is not our aim in a handy book like this to describe the

whole of such edifices. We shall confine our attention to the outermost one attributed to Thirumalai Naick, and which European Archeologists blindly allude to as Thirumala's *choultry!*

It is well known as Pudu Mantapam. (Pudu=New), because it was the latest that was finished in his days and ought to have been quite new then. It is a hypostylic hall of trabeated structure, fully in what is known as the

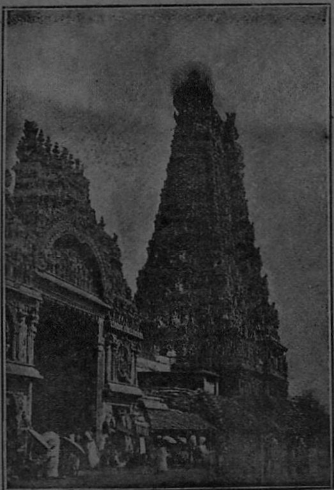


PLATE. 1.

Dravidian style and is built entirely of hard granite. It is just in front of the beautiful tall Eastern gopuram shown in plate I, being only separated from it by a road that passes between. The lie of this hall is from east to west and this hall was evidently intended to form part of the great shrine; only the intention was not carried out, for man can only propose. It was probably left to be carried out by their succes-

sors. Alas! Nearly four centuries have elapsed!

The modern macadamising of the road raises the level of the town higher and higher making the floor of this mantapam knee deep already so that one has to descend into this hall at the present day. This mantapam is generally described as having a trench all round wherein to store water during summer in order to make the hall cooler! This to me appears

a pure myth concocted by moderners who cannot dive deep to get at the truth and further it is an unwarranted scandal on the ability of the ancient master masons to adapt the building to the climatic conditions of the locality.

Every mantapam of the like sort is usually built over a well built peedam or stylobate and this hall forms no exception to this universal rule. Originally the level of the

town ought to have been the same as that of the floor of the so called trench surrounding this beautiful hall. In course of time as the roads increased in level a space round the mantapam was left free so as to keep the *peedam* in view. Otherwise, I am sure, by this time a fourth of the height of this hall would have been submerged. That this is so can be established by irrebuttable evidences both internal and external:

first; a casual examination of the two banks of the so called trench shows that they were not built by the same hands. The sides of the stylobate which form one of the banks of the trench, are richly ornamented in the usual way while the outer bank of the trench is built in plain modern English, fashion, one stone over the other;

secondly: the peedam is already half submerged be-

neath the paved floor of the trench.

thirdly: the ornaments and the carvings on the sides of this platform are in such styles as are adopted ordinarily for such peedams; if the original intention had been to use it as a bank of a trench to store water, the Indian Silpis would have profusely carved them with fishes and crocodiles as may be seen in the steps of any ancient tank;

fourthly: I take you outside this hall, but just to the east of it where you will find the strong and huge unfinished stylobate intended for a huger tower, known as the *Roya Gopuram*. Just go to the middle of it where you will find four tall and massive jambs of stone about 57 feet in hight. Examine carefully the ground from which they spring and you will find that the almost life sized figures that are carved in

bas relief in the pedastal of these pillars, are three-fourths submerged by the road, showing clearly that the ground level was far lower in days gone by.

Let us return now to the eastern facade of this hall: It does not appear to be an imposing structure for you are now looking down upon it from a higher level than was originally intended and further taller houses very near bring it to a low con-

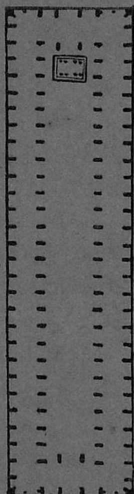
trast. It is said in the Indian Silpa Sastras that "houses should not be built on sites where *gopurams* or *mantapams* cast their shadows." It is highly regrettable that in these days such maxims are considered as blind superstitions and neglected. What a grand site would the Madura temple and its parts be, if the rule had been strictly adhered to! The height of the ceiling of this hall is a little more than

twenty five feet. The entire ceiling is parallel to the floor and is wholly surrounded by a very delicate curved and sloping eaves carved out of the hardest granite stone, shedding an impenitrable shadow on the fine capitals of the columns that surround the hall.

*The hall is three hundred

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*The measurement usually given in books hitherto published by other authors seems to be a blind copy of an original erroneous one which includes not only the hall but the open space outside it.

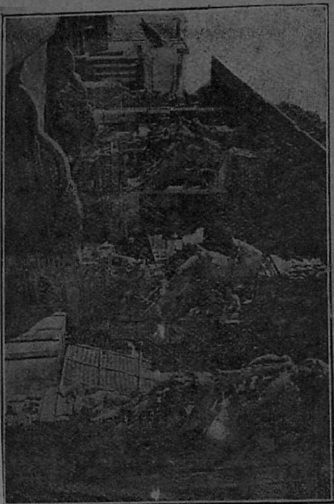


Ground Plan of Pudumantapam

PLATE. 2

and twenty feet long and eighty feet broad and is supported by four rows of mighty beautiful pillars. The middle two rows are kept far apart giving the structure the appearance of a huge hall with suitable aisles on all the sides. Plate II gives the ground plan of the hall, showing clearly the disposition of the wonderfully carved pillars *one hundred and twenty four* in number. In the two outer rows there are thirty

pillars on each wing and in the inner ows there are twenty six on each side. There are again four richly ornamented pillars on each facade of this hall in addition to two others just behind these on each end. On the western end of this hall between the two middle rows of pillars is situated a small but complete mantapam in itself, built entirely of hard well polished black granite. The roofing alone of this small manta-



PLATE, 3.

pam is of carved wood. It is in this small mantapam that the local goddess is seated twice a year to bless her worshippers.

Plate III, shows the grand eastern facade of this hall known also as the Vasantha Mantapam, on a sunny morning at about ten The photograph was taken some decades past when the hand of vandalism and ignorance had not defaced it so much as it has now. It is not possible

now to get such an uninterrupted view. But even then the original appearance of the facade seems to have been sufficiently marred. Look for example at the broken fore-legs of the rearing horse in the illustration. The entrance to the hall may be seen to the left in the photograph reproduced. It appears to be protected by carved parapet walls on either side and perhaps look nice in the plate here given. But, on

careful examination, they will be found to be not in harmony with the pillars near which they are placed. It is like dignity and impudence placed side by side! Quite so; for these are later additions placed there to protect persons from falling into the ditch by its side. It is not seen here in the small reproduction, but may well be seen on the spot, that these parapet walls are unattached to the pillars. Further, they do

hide a beautifully carved portion in the pedastal of these pillars.

This is an additional proof to show that the surrounding trench was but a later growth and formed no part of the original plan. I have a great mind to push these two stone parapets into the ditch by its side and free the two front pillars so that any one may look at the whole of these excellent carvings.

In each of these two pillars

is to be found an equestrian statue facing outside the hall. A model in bronze of the whole column to the right side is kept in the V & A Museum in London. The horses are rearing with the riders well poised. Mr. V. A. Smith says in his book on the history of Indian Art that these horses are anatomically incorrect. May be? But he should know that the ancient Hindus had a better use of their horses than the cruel

dissection of them to see what is inside. Further, they are treated here, as designs showing the spirit, more than the physical form of horses. Yet, he is so much taken with these that he claims for them a western inspiration! If he can claim superiority to the western art only in that way, let him by all means have that satisfaction. Let me only add that he has boldly said so because of the date in which this particular

hall was built; but I am sure he would have hesitated before saying so if he had seen with greater care than is generally given to a foreigner, the inner parts of the Madura temple which were in existence long before modern Europe saw the light of day. The reader may rest assured that they are fine and excellent specimens of pure Dravidian sculpture which are usually placed in front of such mantapams, the whole o

which is designed as a huge chariot to which are yoked such rearing horses with their respective drivers seated over them. In certain cases the statue of him by whom the whole edifice was inspired was placed over such horses as may be seen in the facade of the Thousand Pillar *mantapam* in the great shrine itself.

On either side of these two columns you will find two similar ones but with the car-

vings of the much misunderstood Yalis, the so called 'monsters of the lion type trampling on an elephant'. On Plate IV. is reproduced the picture of the Yali seen in the foreground of the last illustration. It is one of the best specimens of Yalis ever carved on hard granite. In general proportion, or in delicacy of workmanship, you cannot see any thing so excellent. "As works exhibiting difficulties overcome by

patient labour they are unrivalled by any thing found elsewhere" says Mr. Fergusson. At a distance in the same plate you can see another Yali which is facing inside diagonally. A careful inspection will show a difference between the two in the treatment of their respective proboscis. In the distant one the proboscis is treated like that of an elephant in forming part of the animal itself and is made to entwain with that

of the elephant below. In the nearer one it is no proboscis at all but is a floral design that hangs out from the mouth of the rampant lion. This floral design serves as a convenient handle for the fore-arms of the lion and at the same time serves as a good connecting link with the images carved below. To those void of the key to the understanding of Indian symbolism in art, this difference between the two images

of Yalis is quite immaterial, but to the Silpis who conceived and imaged them they conveyed different ideas That Indian art has been highly symbolic is too well known now after so much about it has been written by such able exponents as Mr. Havell and Dr. Coomaraswamy. They have beautifully interpreted these symbols of Indian art.

What then is the significance of these Yalis? There

is not a single instance of a temple in these parts, be it a Saivaite or a Vaishnavaite one, where you do not find an image of this curious animal. Even in a small mantapam, unless it be quite a modern one, you cannot fail to see one or two of these wonderful carvings. In the Madura temple alone there are literally hundreds of them. In this hall that we are considering, there are ten of them as big as the one

reproduced here, besides numerous other small ones carved in relief or otherwise. The location of these Yalis is specially to be noted. In this hall you see two of them, one on either side of the eastern entrance; then you have four, one on each corner of the mantapam; and another four are so situated in the inner rows so as to form a rectangular enclosure where the deity presides during festivals. In the great temple

itself you can easily find these Yalis guarding as it were every image of god and godly men as also in front of mantapams.

Are these images a mere display of the designing faculty of the Silpis or are they the blind and grotesque fancy of the Indian sculptors? Neither, is our emphatic answer. They are deliberately and deeply thought ou images conveying to th philosophical Hindu mind

sacred meanings proclaiming to them for ever their own glorious triumph in the past. But hear what Mr. Fergusson who very much lauded their workmanship, says about these Yalis.

"As works of art, they are the most barbarous, it may be said the most vulgar, to be found in India and do more to shake one's faith in the civilization of the people who produced them, than anything they did in any other

department of art"

Poor Mr. Fergusson! Being born and brought up in the west where all acadamic art is based on the cult of the nude female he can not but come to that conclusion. His æsthetic taste needs pandering to personal ease, voluptuousness and the gratification of the senses. Taste, even though it be a good one is after all very inadequate to the forming of right judgment and it is adverse t

the understanding of noble art. It is really no wonder that Mr. Fergusson has said so but it is indeed highly reggrettable that many a son of the soil has been made to be blind to their significance. The revival of our *National* education is the only hope which gives one some relief.

All that I can say is that the significance of the Yali is a mystery and like all mysteries, seven keys have to be turned to eke out the sec-

ret! I am permitted to give but one turn of the key and I have written elsewhere that in the sculpture of the Yali one can read the history of India from the days of the Lord Buddha *These images of Yalis are as much historic records as those huge images found in the far off Easter Islands, or on the slopes of Bamian in Afganistan.*

In the inner parts of the great temple at Madura, the date of which is beyond our present knowledge, you dc

not find the same representation. There, one can only see the image of a rampant lion with perhaps a floral design hanging from its mouth as may be seen in the illustration shown on plate V. In later edifices yo may find the same lion standing over an elephant the proboscis of which is raised up so as to catch the floral design hanging from the mouth of the Yali. To show the superiority of the lion the designer has



TE. 5.

made it literally bigger than the elephant but the proboscis of the elephant could not be made too long, hence in certain cases the designer had to invest the lion with a proboscis and the two were made to entwain. That is the evelution of the Yali. And lastly in the outer parts of the shrine, which are of still later construction, you can see introduced another small lion over the elephant but below the original lion, as may be

seen in the illustration on plate IV.

It is only too well known that Buddhism, like a stately elephant was freely roaming in India till that lion of men, the *Adi Sankara* overcame it by his prowess. The lion did not kill out the elephant but only controled and conducted it from above. The two formed into a whole and was as it were a pillar of the revived Hinduism. The elephant became power less in the pre-

sence of the lion. This roaming elephant had also been made powerless by an younger lion in the shape of Jainism.

This is the significance of the Yali that can be safely given out at present and these Yalis do well proclaim from where they are that the edifices wherein these images are to be found are those of Hinduism as re-established after its revival by Sankara Every cornor of the Hindu

temple is made to proclaim such a proud success.

This is but one significance of the Yali. India is accused of want of chroniclers to record her history! Do the accusers see this significance of these Yalis? These Yalis will tell them that we had historians but that they were highly spiritual and cared not to record mere physical events as do the historians of to-day. What cared they who won the battle of Paniput or



PLATE 4.

who were starved during the siege of Arcot? Such events were to them, like cinima films, evanascent. The other significances of the Yali are too sacred to be made public at present; suffice it to say that the time is soon approaching when they will be made known to all.

We see then that the workmanship of these images are *excellent* in the Ruskinian sense of the word, and that they convey the idea of a

great praise; indeed all great art is praise. But why should Mr. Fergusson call these images barbarous?

Let us examine the form of these Yalis and see for ourselves whether they are to be considered barbarous or are to considered and ranked as high products of art:

Any image of Yali, in particular this one that we have reproduced may be seen to be bounded by infinite

curves; and there are a few natural objects whose beauty cannot be shown on analysis, to consist in the fact that they are bounded by infinite curves for infinity as Ruskin says is one of the elements of beauty;

secondly: in these images the various forms are subjected to one common impulse. Knock off any portion of it and the whole is gone. You can with your thumb just hide any portion of the image of the

Yali in the illustration given and see for yourself how each part contributes its mite to the whole composition. This satisfies the second element of beauty viz. Unity as type of ceprehensivenses.
thirdly: the sense of possible energy that is displayed in these carvings is a mark of the highest art, manifesting difficulties overcome, magnitude grasped, in which nothing is forced, confused or overcharged. This satisfies

the next element of beauty viz repose, as type of permanence.

fourthly: symmetry, as type of justice cannot be said to be wanting in these images. If at all anything these are highly symmetrical; symmetry is not only another element of beauty but is also the mark of a highly spiritual art.

fifthly: purity, as type of energy is well displayed in these images of the lion and the elephant, in that they are

full of vitality and energy, each limb being well fitted for its alloted work. And this satisfies another element of beauty.

And lastly: no where else can you find such completeness and finish as you see in these carvings and hence moderation, as type of law, which issues in chasteness and refinement, is satisfied.

Thus you find in these images of Yalis infinity, unity, repose, symmetry, purity and

moderation; indeed all the elements of beauty according to that great art critic John Ruskin. Although his classification does not exhaust ~~the~~ the whole, yet it gives all the common essentials of beauty and one can see for himself that these images satisfy him in all these respects.

What doubt can now be entertained as to the beauty of these Yalis? Only analysis should not be carried too far. Let the observer if he be

tinted with western acadamic notions of art forget them for a while and then look at these images. He cannot then fail to agree with us in saying that these images are the products, if not of fine art, of a finer art.

One may not find in these images the close imitation of external nature, but it must be clearly borne in mind by all, especially by the westerners that realism was never the Hindu ideal. "Oriental

art as a whole does not aim at the reproduction of the facts of nature, objectively considered ; its aim is suggestion, selection, emphasis, design—the representation, not of objective but of subjective fact. The inner and the informing spirit and not the outward semblance is for all artists of the Indian tradition, the object of art, the aim with which they wrestle. The image is conceived as a sort of apparition from a more

real world of essential life." "It is the adoration of the unknown force which maintains the universal laws and which preserves the types of all beings; it is the surmise of all that in nature which does not fall within the domain of sense—of all that immense realm of things which neither the eyes of our body, nor even those of our spirit can see."

Who is not surprised, on his first sight, at the *small-*

ness of the lion? The European artist will sacrifice his mental image to the physical image of the lion. But not so the Indian artist. He sacrifices even the actual image in order to depict that image which is formed in his moral retina through his intelectual lens. He cares more for the truth of impression and thought than for the truth of form. That is the reason why western art is said to be realistic while the

eastern one is said to be idealistic. If with this notion in mind, Mr. Fergusson and others of his kidney, were to look at these images, they will not call them barbarous. "Further it is entirely useless to judge an art like the Indian with conventional ideas about idolatory, superstition, and the like. To get even a glimpse of the thought of a real artist, the student must often go down into the depths, must use every means to himself

in sympathy with the author. In fact a hundred years ago Gothic art was almost universally condemned as barbaric, in words very similar to those often applied to Indian art at the present day."

On plate VI is reproduced side by side two drawings, with one of which westerners and the educated Indians may be familiar; it is the drawing of a statue known as Venus kept in the Louvre at Paris. The westerners are

proud of it as the best specimen of their sculpture though mutiliated. The other one is the drawing of a common statue that may be seen in the Indian temples. The former is indeed realistic and may perhaps tempt a youth to embrace it like the Greek boy who is said to have actually hidden himself in a Greecian temple in order to embrace and kiss a statue newly erected there! Not so the Indian image. The mo-

ment one approaches it a feeling of reverential awe is created in the mind while all earthly feeling flies away and he is made simply to stand before a purely mental conception of a women. A westerner should specially note the means by which the Indian artists have eschewed all mundane ideas from their images and how they have impressed upon these images the quality of the human mind alone. Indeed Indian

sculpture require at the instant of their perception active exertion of the intellectual powers. It is this that a westerner fails to see in the Indian images and confounds the whole as due to the inability of the Indian artists to reproduce nature as even the westerners have done. The aim of the Indian artist was entirely different from that of the western artist. The Indian artists never cared to depict what

they were able to see around them whenever wanted. Their aim was to render in concrete form what cannot be really shown in that way; *All their images of gods are but the representations of the inner ego in man in its various aspects and in its various stages of evolution.* "The innumerable gods of Hindu mythology are but names for the energies of the first triad in its successive manifestations unto man". Take for

example the image of Nataraja, which may be seen in every temple. What does that image signify? There is in every man, born and to be born, something not known or even detected by many, which is ever *dancing* in his heart, which is capable of creating, of preserving, and of destroying and which everybody why, every philosophy is trying to know and even analyse if possible. Have the western artists ever

attempted to depict *this* in art? One may go round and round the gallaries of Europe in vain! It is only here in India that you find artists trying to image such ultra-physical conceptions. And one may feel sure that what has been done by the Indian artists can not be improved. That which gives life to the physical frame, which disappears after death, which can not be seen, which has no form to the physical eyes,

which cannot be ordinarily perceived, which every age is trying to know, which known every thing else is known, yes it is that which the Indian artists have tried to depict in these images of Nataraja! Let western art with all its vaunted civilization and mechanical appliances try to depict such conceptions in art. There is not the least doubt that it will fail in the attempt. One may rest assured that they,



LATE 7.

submerged as they are in materialism will not even think of rendering in art such high philosophical conceptions. They are satisfied with the mere representation of an actual John or Simon; beyond that they can not go They care for the husk anc not for the grain inside Indian art did not and d not care for these perishin forms but cared only for tha which exists for ever. O plate VII is reproduced th

image of Siva which is known as *Gaja samhara murthi*, (the god who destroyed the elephant) found at the northern end of the eastern facade of this hall we are speaking of. Nothing can be more appealing than the concep·tion of Siva, "dancing and singing in a wild manner on the burning ground and smearing himself with the ashes of the dead and adorning himself with the skulls and bones of the dead; or

going about naked in the streets of householder rishis and tempting their woman folk, living in bliss with his own consort also or performing severe austerities wearing his hair in jatas, drinking and eating from skulls, killing, maiming *or otherwise destroying animal life.*" Does any intelligent person suppose that all this is a description of any being in flesh and bones, human superhuman or otherwise? Surely, those whc

have any glimpse of the life after death, or those who have developed in them a phsycic vision will not fail to see in the description given of Siva, a description of the inner ego in man freed from this mortal shell. It is in the aspect of destroying animal life, that Siva is depicted here in one of the pillars. "The story is told in the puranas that *Siva* once destroyed an asura in the shape of an elephant, when it came

and disturbed the meditation of holy men who had gathered themselves for the purpose. The account given in the various books are different, but the fact that Siva destroyed an elephant and had the elephant skin as his clothing is common to all." It should not be forgotten that the stories given in the Puranas are mere blinds and that one should not be carried away by the outward impression it produces. *Th*

inner spirit in man which destroys and overcomes the mere animal nature of this earthly body is depicted here. It is this spiritual ideal that underlies the whole of Indian art and which the west and those that are trained in their way fail to see.

As a work of art, this image can stand comparison with any other master piece be it of the east or of the west. It quite satisfies the rules to be observed in the

making of such images according to the Indian Silpa sastra: A pair of arms holds the *Sula* or the trident and the *kapala*; another pair raised above holds the skin of the elephant; a middle pair holds the *Mriga* and the *Parasu*; and a lower pair holds the *Dhanus* and the *Banam*, one in each hand. A westerner may perhaps be disgusted with these additional arms but he may be quite sure that it is not so disgust-

ing as investing human beings with wings as is done in their art. Let him consider any pair of these arms and see whether or not they are anatomically correct in the right place and posture! The left leg is as it should be in such images, planted firmly on the head of the elephant; while the right one is bent and lifted up above the thigh of the other leg. The tail of the elephant is visible over the *makuta* of

Siva and the artist has arranged on either side the position of the four legs of the elephant in a beautiful manner. The skin of the elephant is so arranged as to look like a *prabamandala* to the image of Siva. The image itself is adorned with all ornaments very chastely. This is a unique piece of patiently and elaborately carved sculpture. No artist will fail to observe the simple appearance of permanence

and quiteness exhibited by this image. "This image seems to express the idea that in all work it is but this body that acts, while the self, serene and unshaken and unattached, is but a spectater of the drama where itself is manifested as an actor." The facial expression here depicted is of one "who beareth no ill-will to any being, friendly and compassionate, without attachment and egoism, balanced in pain and pleasure

and forgiving, ever content, harmonious, with the self controlled, resolute, from whom the world doth not shrink away, and who doth not shrink away from the world, freed from the anxieties of joy, anger and fear, who wants nothing, is pure, expert, passionless, untroubled, renouncing every undertaking."

What the western critic may find fault with in this image is the fact that it is

not like any real human form as are the European statues of gods, which are merely, I should say, the image of the body of this or that man or woman who was considered beautiful in the days in which the artist lived. Our own artist Raja Ravi Varma, great though he be, has fallen into the same error as do the European artists in representing the images of gods in ideal human forms. The ancient Indian artists were

not incapable of doing that as may be wrongly supposed by moderners. Indeed Portraiture is but the A. B. C. of art. Any one with patience and perseverence can learn to portray in a few months. "It requires nothing more for its attainment than a true eye, a steady hand, and moderate industry–qualities which in no degree separate the potrait artist from a watch maker, a pin maker or any other neat-handed arti-

fier." What is portraiture after all than the art of producing one thing to look exactly like another? Have not the ancient Indian artists done that? For example in Madura, in this hall we are considering there are ten portraits of the Naick kings who ruled this part of the country. Take the potrait of Thirumal Naick; we find two other statues of him in Madura one inside the great temple and another in a hill-

temple four miles off the town. It is indeed a pity that these two latter portraits are inaccessible to foreigners and still more regretable that the one found in the inner row of this hall has been spoiled by German Varnishes and colours of very recent date. All these three statues are exactly identical, indeed they look as if they were cast from the same mould and had they been made of metal it may be very suspicious;

but here they are hewn and carved out of the hardest stone and that in days when they had not the modern measuring tables and screws for the blind copying of images. When these artists were able to carve one image exactly like another will it be impossible for them to carve an image exactly like a human being if ever they cared to do so? But it should not be forgotten that even in such portraits they

never wanted to be realistic as do the modern artists. Imitation was never their aim. It should be well borne in the mind of the Westerners, especially by those who look with Mr. Fergusson's spectacles that 'ideas of truth may be stated by any signs or symbols which have a definite signification in the minds of those to whom they are addressed, although such signs be themselves no image nor likeness of any thing.

Whatever can exite in the mind the conception of certain facts, can give ideas of truth, though it be in no degree the imitation or resemblance of those facts.' This statue of Thirumalai Naick serves all the purpose which a modern portrait statue serves; and more than that, in this statue one can easily read the whole life of the man whom it represents. This can not be said of modern statues found in

every corner of our big towns.

The spiritual ideal of the Indian art should never be lost sight of and when looked at from this stand point, this hall we are speaking of becomes a store house of art treasures; and it is only highly regrettable that such a valuable and unique hall is not properly taken care of.

Let us now enter the hall and behold it is terribly crowded! What on earth are

these people doing? Are they there to admire the sculptures left to them as legacies by their ancients? Nothing of the sort. Poor Indians! They have been de-Indianized and made blind by the so called education that is imparted to them at a prohibitive cost. Most of them do not even feel the presence of the innumerable art treasures that are there. Added to that the present state in which the whole

edifice is kept brings disgrace to the taste of those who are concerned in the proper keeping of the hall. The whole of it is let out to merchants who ply their various trades there. Most of the pillars are hidden by the display of the merchandise, the traders having no scruples in making use of any part of these images as a convenient handle to tie their ropes with. The authorities concerned in the

false hope of keeping the hall clean, white wash the pillars every time a distinguished visitor comes to the hall, in addition to the periodical white washes. These washes have now formed into a thick coating over the finest carvings that are found in every pillar. Such is the taste imparted to the Indians by the present day education. Money making and hence commerce is the only thing that they seem to have learnt

from the western education and the *Devastanam* has not escaped such an influence! It is a pity to think that the goddess *Meenakshi* will be enriched by the poor collection of rents that are paid by the traders here. Will she not be really enriched, I ask, if Madurians and others who enter the hall are made to see the hall in its pristine purity when they will be profited by the noble ideas that are intended to be conveyed by

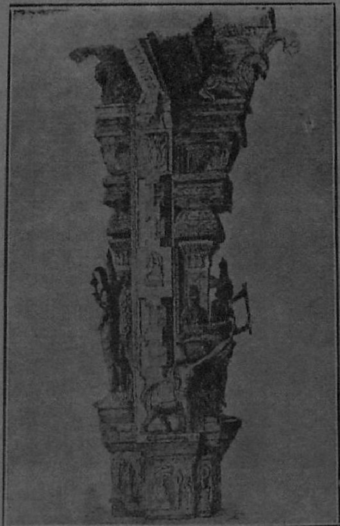
these innumerable statues and images?

People here talk of Museums and Art galleries, when they have a splendid one already ready made here in this hall. If the St. Peter's at Rome be let out to traders who occupy every corner of it and then if the Romans clamour to have a gallery established, that will not be half so absurd and ludicrous as what our people here are wanting to do.

I can only express the hope that very soon the merit and glory of this hall will be known to those who are concerned, who will drive these traders away to their proper places and have this hall rid of them and restore it to its original purity and object.

Although most of the pillars of this hall look alike, a careful and closer examination will reveal that every pillar contains a very different design and the carving of

a different theme. It is this diversity in unity that speaks so much for this hall. A critical study of every pillar will not only reveal the history of the *Pandya Nadu*, but will also teach the philosophy of the Hindus as beautifully narrated in the Hindu Puranas. The whole hall is as it were an open book where the Hindus were expected to be reminded of their own past history and philosophy by merely look-



PLATE, 8.

ing at these images The present state in which the hall is kept prevents me from reproducing and pointing out many of the beautiful specimens of carvings that are found here; there being literally no room to stand conveniently either to draw or photograph. I give however the drawing a typical one of the pillars, found in this hall, which may be seen in plate VIII. No architect will fail to be impressed by it. The

elaborate carving in these columns show, as Griggs puts it, 'considerable refinement in delicacy of design suggesting alike to those who work in stone or metal'. The present day builders may learn from these the ingeinious arrangements made by the Indian artisan of adding to the mass of the columns without marring their beauty' as a recent author puts it. The whole column *appears to be* made up of three pieces of

stone; of which the central shaft is a squared one, and the seemingly appended shafts on either side carry in them the carved images as may be seen in the illustration. But the whole column is carved out of one huge block. It is said that a good deal of fine architecture consists in true proportion. How much it is so, can be judged from a critical study of any one of these columns. The breadth, the thickness, and

the hight of these pillars are so proportional that a very little alteration in any of them will marr the beauty of it. If you can draw well, just make the experiment by drawing in a paper a pillar like this in all details but a little shorter and see the effect for yourself. Perhaps you cannot draw; you may in that case just get a copy of Mr. Fergusson's book on the Indian and Eastern architecture from the nearest

library if you have not one with you, and in the first volume where he talks about this hall, you will find the drawing of a column said by him to be in this hall. The artist who has drawn that has actually done what I ask you to do. Therefore you can compare that with the one I have drawn and reproduced here and then see for yourself whether or not the beauty of the column has been spoiled in it by making

it a little shorter. It is really curious that Mr. Fergusson says that that drawing in his book represents one of the columns of this hall. I beg to submit that it does not. Not only has the pillar been dwarfed in that drawing but the very design of the column has been much altered for the worse: the shape of the appended shafts are not true, the crouching lions in the brackets above are too much protruding out

so as to give the column the appearance of being a top heavy one. If you want to verify for yoursalf what I say go to the hall and look at the column near the one which contains the statue of Thirumalai Naick, just to the east of it. That is the pillar which has been so badly represented. It is no wonder that persons who write out books on Indian art and architecture from a perusal of the collection of photographs

in the India Office commit such blunders! It seems to be usual with such authers to call a photograph taken of the people bathing in the Kumbakonam Mahamaham tank as Indians bathing in the holy Ganges! Only they don't seem to be aware of many a laughter within the sleeves which such descriptions evoke here. Such blunders are too numerous to be mentioned. It is indeed a pity that it is from such

misrepresentations that Europe is made to see Indian art treasures. What wonder then that our art is considered as barbarous by the people there. It is all the more to be regretted that in a recent publication on Indian Architecture by Indian authers a blind copy of the same pillar from Mr.Fergues-son's book is reproduced as showing the elevation of a typical column of this hall! If one will go and see things

for himself before he describes them to others such blunders will not be committed. I assure however the reader that the drawing here reproduced is a very accurate one drawn on the spot directly from the pillar itself. I regret that it has lost much of its details in the small reproduction given here; but the general aspect is well brought out and much of the details are suggested.

See how effectively the

graceful curves of the sculptured figures on either side are made to stand in marked contrast to the geometrical and floral designs on the shafts themselves; see how impressively the central shaft separates and at the same time unites the two additional shafts one on either side! Of these added shafts one is smaller in breadth than the other, yet how symmetrical the whole column looks! The figures on

either side are of very delicate workmanship and are richly and chastely adorned with ornaments. The one whose back alone is visible, is the image of Vishnu, one of the Indian Trinity. The other whose profile is seen, is feeding an elephant with sugar-cane. The story goes that once Siva, in the shape of an ordinary mortal, gave some sugar-cane to an elephant carved in stone. The people with their Raja were

wondering who this fool could be who gave sugar-cane to a stone image of an elephant! But, lo! the stone image raised its proboscis and swallowed sumptuosly the sweet that was offered to it. People then knew that this man could be none else than their own god the mighty *Siva*. The story is but a puranic blind as was hinted a few pages back and one should not be carried away by the literal meaning

of the story To understand the significance of this image of Siva one should know the symbolism of the human body and the elephant in the Indian Art It is the human form that represents the inner ego in man and it is the elephant that represents the physical body of man. Hence the significance is clear. It would serve as a good lesson to Hatha Yogis to know this significance. The spirited posture of the

figure depicted here is enriched by a delicate vestment fully ornamented with chaste designs. The unhappy way in which these master-pieces are kept now prevents one from seeing these rich details, unless it be by a close and searching examination. No photograph or drawing can do full justice in displaying such tender workmanship of the human hand, almost at present hidden by blind and ignorant oilings and white-

washings.

There are twice ten such elaborately carved pillars, ten at either end of this hall which contain the image of all the Hindu gods. The images of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Suria, Nataraja etc , are found amidst these For a description of them as found in the Indian books, the reader will do well to refer to that admirable book on Hindu Iconography, by Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao. But

for their esoteric meanings the reader must use his own intution or should wait till he meets his *Guru*. Here in this hall they are treated more artistically than elsewhere Besides these, you have in the inner rows ten statues of the Naick kings in the worshipping posture, five on each row. We shall not tarry here to see these images for in the first place they can not be seen to advantage. The hall is so crowded with

busy sellers and buyers that you will be doing an injustice if you stand amidst them looking at these works fo art. Secondly even if you have no scruples to do so, you will be considered a mad man if you stand there looking at the pillars without doing any *business!* For as the Tamil proverb says 'one who is clothed amidst a nation of nude people would be considered a mad man'. So I have to hurry you



PLATE, 9.

through the hall and take you to the western end of it.

In plate IX is reproduced the splendid range of columns on the western end of this hall. In the foreground to the left is seen the favourite theme of the Indian Silpis, the marriage of *Siva* and *Parvathi*. The simple grouping here is very effective 'The admirable modesty expressed in the bending figure of *Parvathi*, in the centre, who is being given to

Siva in marriage by Vishnu pouring water in the hands of Siva, is worthy of the attention of every artist'.

In the next column is seen a very pleasing image of Thirumurthi. Beyond that pillar on the ground may be seen the tools and other sundries of a locksmith or an umbrella repairer! It seems that in the days in which this photograph was taken, the hall was not so crowded as it is now; for a like photo-

graph without any other obstacle cannot be taken now.

I shall not tire the reader with the description of the other images found here in this hall. I shall only end by saying that you will be more benefitted by a direct inspection of these in person. But I wish to draw your attention to the pillar seen at a distance in the last illustration but standing apart from the other pillars. At the centre of that pillar is seen a

dark ring that looks like the toothed wheel of a watch; surely it is not that, but is the *mandala* that surrounds the beautiful figure of Nataraja carved there. This image is interesting in more ways than one. The sculptor who carved it was one *Sumandara Asari*, who like all sincere artists never liked any one being present by his side while he was at work. Thirumalai Naick, his patron King had ordered that none

should disturb the artist by approaching him while at work, but became himself anxious to see the artist at work. The king learnt one day that the sculptor was in the constant habit of chewing *pansupari*, that he employed a boy servant who was seated behind the artist even while at work to serve him with folded betels and that he never turned back while receiving them from the boy. Thirumalai Naick taking

advantage of this, got up the scaflolding and seated himself behind the artist replacing the poor little boy! The sculptor was not at all disturbed and the king had his wish satisfied.

None but those who can understand the deep springs of loyalty and reverence in the Hindu heart to their Kings, can understand the great honour done in this way to this ancient sculptor by his patron King! Indeed

I consider this the greatest honour ever done to an artist in the whole world. Even the Pope's visit to Michal Angelo's house is nothing when compared to this!

Innumerable are the other small reliefs and figures depicting various puranic and historical themes, that are found in the other stately columns of this monumental hall. It would require volumes to describe and reproduce all of them. They

would amply repay if so done. Full justice can not however be done at present to the reproductions, by the state in which the hall is now maintained.

Suffice it to say that the architects who planned this hall were the sculptors who carved these images and the masons who erected this structure. The idea of an independent architectural profession is a mere modern fallacy, the thought of which

had never so much as entered the heads of our ancesters who built these wonderful columns. The architect who was not as Ruskin says a sculptor or a painter, was nothing better than a frame meker on a large scale.

Dear readers! Let me take you out of this hall via the western entrance and land you in the immediate *Sannadhi* of the God *Sundareswara*. Will you now pray with me before Him for the

restoration of this unique *South Indian Art Gallery* to its original purity and purpose?

Tamil Sangam Power Press, Madura-18.